

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Sanford D. Bishop, Jr. (GA-02) on Thursday was joined by his Georgia House and Senate colleagues to express concern with the Department of Labor's recently proposed changes to the H-2A Visa program, which allows foreign nationals entry into the United State for temporary or seasonal agricultural work. Bishop initiated the letter of concern to Labor Secretary Hilda Solis, which was also signed by Georgia Congressional delegation members Senator Saxby Chambliss (R-GA), Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA), Congressman Lynn Westmoreland (GA-03), Congressman Nathan Deal (GA-09), Congressman Jack Kingston (GA-01), Congressman David Scott (GA-13), Congressman Hank Johnson (GA-04) and Congressman John Barrow (GA-12).

"The H-2A program is an important tool that enables the farm families we represent to grow their high quality products," Bishop stated in the letter. "The program is designed to balance the legitimate needs of U.S. workers, seasonal immigrant H-2A farm workers, and employers. Unfortunately, the most recent proposed rule appears to be crafted in a manner that does not truly reflect the needs of both the employee and the producer."

The H-2A program is a critical labor resource that a large number of Georgia farmers depend on when they are unable to secure enough U.S. workers to fill their seasonal job openings. Currently, more than 60 Georgia farmers employ about 6,000 H-2A workers who help produce every fruit and vegetable grown in the region, as well as pine seedlings, trees and vegetable plant sets. If implemented, the proposed changes could potentially increase the costs and burdens of farmers and growers who participate in the H-2A program.

"We sincerely appreciate Congressman Sanford Bishop and other key members of the Georgia delegation supporting our efforts to have an effective H-2A program for produce growers," Robert Dickey, a Crawford County farmer and past President of the Georgia Peach Council, said. "Fruits and vegetables are the largest combined plant crop segment in the state of Georgia, generating a farm gate value of \$1.1 billion. Having a reliable, seasonal labor supply is critical to an industry dependent on fresh market sales."

View the Georgia delegation's [Letter to Labor Secretary Hilda Solis](#) .

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